

**EXHIBIT 3**

[https://theeagle.com/news/a\\_m/new-texas-am-journalism-director-backs-out/article\\_fbb3bfc6-2005-11ee-9a3d-b37a5fb47416.html](https://theeagle.com/news/a_m/new-texas-am-journalism-director-backs-out/article_fbb3bfc6-2005-11ee-9a3d-b37a5fb47416.html)

TOP STORY EDITOR'S PICK

## New Texas A&M journalism director Kathleen McElroy to return to University of Texas

Alex Miller

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Kathleen McElroy, Class of 1981, is announced as the Department of Communication and Journalism's Director at a ceremony Tuesday in front of Texas A&M's Academic Building.

Meredith Seaver

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Alex Miller

**K**athleen McElroy stood outside Texas A&M's Academic Building on the morning of June 13 as a celebrated former student who returned to her alma mater as the university's new journalism director for the revamped program.

Less than a month later, McElroy, A&M Class of 1981, is leaving before she was expected to begin her role in August.

Behind it all, McElroy said she thinks A&M leadership was forced to listen to outside influences with "great concerns" on diversity, equity and inclusion. McElroy noted A&M officials she worked with made it clear they knew she wasn't a "DEI advocate or proponent" and that those views weren't her main academic mission. McElroy's research has included the relationship between news media and race and her doctoral thesis was on the obituaries of civil rights leaders.

"I think just because I am a Black woman, I am now associated with DEI in ways that I have no control over," McElroy said.

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Now, McElroy will return to her former employer: the University of Texas at Austin. She was most recently a professor in Texas' School of Journalism and Media and served as director of the School of Journalism from 2018 to 2022.

When McElroy's hiring was announced, she signed a contract to be a tenured professor at A&M, like she was at Texas. That requires approval from the A&M System Board of Regents. Over the last month, though, McElroy's contract changed so much, she said she didn't consider it legitimate anymore.

"There was no way for me to even be there," McElroy told The Eagle.

A&M officials in its Department of Communication and Journalism acted in good faith over the last month, McElroy said. She noted she doesn't officially know where the disconnect came, but she's been told it could be as high as the Board of Regents as well as influences outside the university.

A new state law will go into effect in January that bans offices, programs and training that promotes diversity, equity and inclusion. Recently, according to the Texas Tribune, the Texas A&M System began an audit of all DEI offices systemwide in response to the new law.

A&M officials altered McElroy's original contract and asked if she would change it to a five-year deal to become a professor of practice, she noted. This would allow McElroy to move forward in her position without Regents approval. McElroy agreed. This weekend, A&M officials came back with a third offer and lowered it to a one-year deal. McElroy said an A&M official called her on Monday and said they thought she would negotiate the new deal. It made no sense in McElroy's eyes.

McElroy said she was told her employment was discussed by the A&M Board of Regents at a recent meeting. The Texas Tribune reported A&M Regents discussed the hire of McElroy with A&M President M. Katherine Banks in executive session during a meeting last Thursday.

"The last [discussion] I had suggested that I had no chance of surviving at A&M," McElroy said.

McElroy has since rescinded her resignation from Texas and will reprise her role as a tenured professor at the university, according to an email obtained by The Eagle sent from Professor David Ryfe, Texas' School of Journalism and Media's current director. Ryfe told The Eagle that McElroy informed him of her wish to return to Texas several days ago. Ryfe said he didn't ask for any details about her situation at A&M, but noted he was happy to hear she would return to Texas.

“She’s really been, in her time here, central to our culture and what we do,” Ryfe said of McElroy. “She’s an excellent teacher and mentor to undergraduate and graduate students. Just a really excellent colleague and faculty member. So to have someone like that leave is not completely uncommon at UT. Our faculty have opportunities elsewhere and sometimes they avail themselves to those opportunities. But it would’ve left a big hole in the school to have her leave, so I’m super excited and happy for her to hear the news that she wants to stay.”

After graduating from A&M in 1981 with a bachelor’s degree in broadcast journalism, McElroy was hired at The Eagle and worked in news, sports and features. She later worked at the Huntsville Item, the Austin American-Statesman, Newsday and The National.

In 1991, McElroy was hired at The New York Times and worked there as an editor in various positions for 20 years. In 2011, McElroy began her doctorate at Texas and graduated in 2014. She also holds a masters of arts from New York University.

In 2007, McElroy was selected to the Texas A&M Former Journalism Students Association’s Hall of Honor.

By all accounts, McElroy’s hire appeared to be a home run for A&M.

“I am optimistic about what’s ahead for journalism education at this university and believe strongly in offering the opportunity for our students to earn a degree through a well-rounded curriculum,” said Jose Bermúdez, interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, after McElroy was hired.

On Tuesday, Bermúdez said in a statement A&M’s policy doesn’t permit them to comment on personnel deliberations.

“We can confirm that Dr. McElroy has an offer in hand and that we have not been notified her plans have changed — we hope that’s not the case,” Bermúdez said in a statement. “We certainly regret any misunderstanding that may have taken place.”

McElroy’s quick departure has made her feel terrible, she said. She noted she didn’t want the “hoopla” when she was hired, but did it to uplift the university’s reemerging journalism department.

“I feel now kind of like a pawn in all of this,” McElroy said.

A journalism major under the Department of Communication and Journalism was approved by A&M’s Board of Regents in February and is expected to be offered as a bachelor of arts or a bachelor of science degree. However, the program is still pending approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which is slated to meet later this month.

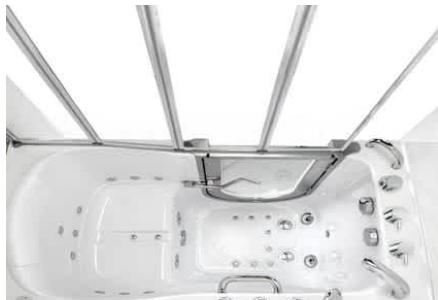
For 55 years, including McElroy’s time at A&M, the university had a journalism department and degree before it was discontinued in 2004. A&M has continued to offer journalism education in indirect paths as a minor and later as a degree in university studies.

Hart Blanton, head of A&M’s Department of Communication and Journalism, noted recruiting McElroy was a huge step forward for A&M’s journalism program when she was hired.

Now, the university is back to the drawing board.

"I want A&M to have journalism," McElroy said. "I do. I want the program to flourish. I want its professors to flourish. I especially want the students to flourish and get the kind of education they deserve. I have no desire to bring journalism down, but it seems like other forces do."

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